

***Sisyrinchium montanum* (Greene)**

strict blue-eyed grass
Iridaceae (Iris Family)

Status: State Threatened

Rank: G5S1

General Description: Adapted from FNA (2002): *Sisyrinchium montanum* is a matted perennial, growing in small, dense tufts or clusters, up to 20 in. (50 cm) tall. The rhizomes are not easily seen. The stems are simple to several, obviously 2 winged, 1/16 to 1/8 in. (1.5-3.7 mm) wide, and hairless, with entire to finely toothed margins similar in color and texture to the stem body. The leaf blades are mostly basal, hairless, linear, 4 to 12 in. (10-30 cm) long, and 1/16 to 1/8 in. (1-3.7 mm) wide. The inflorescences are borne singly and are erect to nodding, on slender, smooth 3/4 to 1 in. (2-2.5 cm) long stalks. The flowers are blue to more often blue-purple, with 6 distinct, broadly elliptic to oblanceolate corolla lobes, 1/32 to 1/2 in. (1-1.5 cm) long, that are rounded to somewhat blunt, notched, abruptly bristle tipped, and with 1/32 to 1/16 in. (1-2 mm) long corolla tubes that are slightly inflated below. The two sheathing bracts are usually green or bronze, hairless, rarely with purplish margins, and usually with finely toothed keels. The outer bract exceeds the length of the flowers and measures 1 1/2 to 3 in. (36-76mm). The shorter inner bract measures 1/2 to 2 in. (12-46 mm). The capsules are egg to globe shaped, 1/8 to 1/4 inch (3-6.8 mm) long, tan to dark brown (sometimes with a purplish tinge), encasing numerous black seeds.

Identification Tips: *Sisyrinchium idahoense* closely resembles *S. montanum*, however there are a few distinguishing characteristics. The outer bract of *S. idahoense* generally clasps at the base for more than 1/8 in. (4 mm), it is not twice as long as the inner bract and the inner bract does not abruptly protrude from the outer bract, while *S. montanum* has outer bracts that clasp at the base for less than 1/8 in. (4 mm), and are nearly twice the length of the inner bract, which often abruptly protrudes from the outer bract. Furthermore, the tepals of *S. idahoense* are oblanceolate, notched, and almost at ninety-degree angles to the base, whereas the tepals of *S. montanum* are broadly rounded and pointy at the tip or deeply notched, erect and bearing a small awn.

Phenology: The species has been observed flowering in May.

Range: This species is frequent in British Columbia east of the Cascade Mountains to Alberta and south to Colorado, Wyoming and

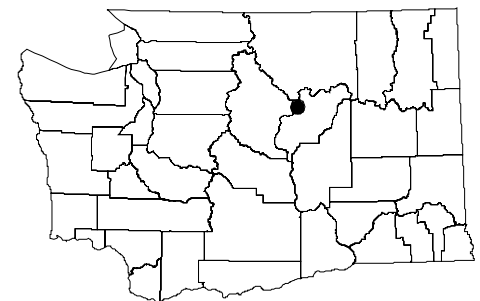
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Known distribution
of *Sisyrinchium montanum*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Montana. The population in Douglas County, Washington, is disjunct from the nearest known population of *Sisyrinchium montanum*, which is found in northern Idaho.

Habitat: In Washington, *Sisyrinchium montanum* is found growing on steep western-facing slopes in a small natural seep/spring adjacent to the east side of the Columbia River at an elevation of 700 ft. It was found in a ponderosa pine/ big sagebrush/Sandberg bluegrass/ (*Pinus ponderosa*/*Artemisia tridentata*/*Poa secunda*) plant community. Other associated species include alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), dwarf evening primrose (*Oenothera strigosa*), Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), Canada goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), garden asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*), and Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*).

Ecology: *Sisyrinchium montanum* is found in moist meadows and streambanks in steppe and montane zones.

State Status Comments: Since 1999, there has only been one recorded population of *Sisyrinchium montanum* consisting of approximately 50 plants.

Inventory Needs: Additional surveys are needed along the Columbia River in appropriate habitats, and the known occurrence in Douglas County should be revisited and its status assessed.

Threats and Management Concerns: Livestock grazed the area in the past, but not recently. The current threats to the taxon are primarily from residential development.

References:

Flora of North America Editorial Committee, eds. 2002. *Flora of North America, North of Mexico volume 26: Magnoliophyta: Liliidae: Liliales and Orchidales*. New York and Oxford. Oxford University Press. 723 pp.